

EXTENSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate remain in a period of morning business until 5:15 this afternoon, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed in morning business for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REPORT ON TRIP TO PAKISTAN,
AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, TURKEY,
AND ENGLAND

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I returned on Saturday evening from a trip to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, and England. The trip was led by a very dear friend of mine and a great leader of this Senate who happens to be the Presiding Officer at the moment, Senator WARNER of Virginia, and it included Senator SESSIONS, Senator THOMAS, Senator BINGAMAN, Senator SALAZAR, in addition to myself.

I know if the Presiding Officer was allowed to speak in the position in which he sits that he would be the first to acknowledge that this was one of the most extraordinary trips either one of us has ever taken in the 28 years we have served together in the U.S. Senate.

The focus of the trip was to assess the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. We also conveyed to the men and women of our Armed Forces the extraordinary support for them in the Congress and throughout the Nation, regardless of our debates and differences over Iraq policy.

In meeting with our troops, including many from my home State of Michigan, it was they who lifted our spirits. As always, I came away deeply impressed by the professionalism, dedication, and high morale of our troops. They are truly America's finest.

The situation in Afghanistan is hopeful. President Karzai has led his nation with a firm and steady hand. He has successfully, albeit gradually, neutralized the warlords and demobilized and disarmed their forces. The Taliban has indeed regrouped to some extent and, together with a much weakened al-Qaida, are capable of causing casualties among the Afghan Army and coal-

ition and NATO forces, but they are not a threat to the Afghan nation.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Army is growing stronger, the training of the Afghan police is improving, a large number of provincial reconstruction teams are helping with local governance, and NATO is assuming more of the burden of providing security throughout the country. Serious work does remain, including the need to deal with poppy cultivation and the drug traffickers. But overall the situation in Afghanistan provides grounds for optimism.

Sadly, the same cannot be said of Iraq. The situation in Iraq is deeply troubling and threatens to grow worse. Since the recent attack on the Golden Mosque in Samarra, there has been a huge increase in sectarian violence. The increase is so significant that our senior military leaders in Iraq say it has replaced the insurgent attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces as the No. 1 security problem there.

Although there has been some progress in training the Iraqi Army, even a stronger Iraqi Army cannot prevent a civil war. Only the political and religious leaders and the police can do that. The police are not making significant progress in coming together as a cohesive force. In some critical areas, including Baghdad, where the militias continue to dominate, the police are not reliable and are still likely to respond to the sectarian calls of the clerics and the militias instead of the government.

Do we need to succeed in Iraq now that we are there? Yes, because the outcome there will have a major effect on the region and on our own security. I define success as a stable Iraq with a government of national unity supported by a reliable national army and police who are not weakened by sectarian fissures.

To achieve that success, General Casey, the Commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, reiterated to us that there is no military solution to the violence without a political solution.

We need to do everything we can to help the Iraqis achieve a prompt political solution, which means the quick formation of a government of national unity involving representatives of the three main Iraqi factions. It also means a highly sectarian individual would not be heading up the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of the Interior. The alternative to a prompt formation of a government of national unity by Iraqi leaders is a continuation of this drift to all-out civil war.

In Baghdad we met with Prime Minister Jaafari, who was nominated by the dominant Shiite faction—the United Iraqi Alliance—as their candidate for Prime Minister in the new government. Although he was confident that a national unity government would be formulated by the end of April, his optimism was not widely shared by others we met. Moreover, his

one-vote victory for the nomination to continue on as Prime Minister is being contested from both within and without the Shiite coalition. I shared with him the letter to President Bush that Senators COLLINS, JACK REED, and I had written, the bottom line of which is that:

A prompt political settlement is not only essential to the Iraqis, it is a condition of our continued presence.

I told him his “end of April” commitment to President Jaafari, in my judgment, met that test of a prompt political settlement.

We also met with leaders from the two main Sunni Arab parties: Mr. Hashimi and Mr. Samarai of the Iraqi Islamic Party, and Mr. Mutlak of the Iraqi Dialogue Council. They were not optimistic about the negotiations and forcefully advocated a decisional role rather than a facilitating role for the United States in the negotiations. Mr. Mutlak argued:

You are responsible for this mess and you must correct what you have done. You have to dictate the result.

The Sunni leaders were also of the view that Iraq has been in the midst of a civil war between the militias and the innocent Iraqis for some time, and they voiced their concern about Iranian influence over the Shiite parties. I told them, and I know the other members of our codel, of our delegation told them as bluntly as we know how that their dictator was removed at a great loss of American blood and treasure and that the Iraqis and only the Iraqis will decide their own fate, and that our continued presence should depend on their promptly choosing a path of reconciliation and unity against violence and terror.

On our second day in Iraq we met with the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad. One constant theme we found in Iraq and elsewhere in the region was the high regard with which all hold our Ambassador, Mr. Khalilzad. Unfortunately, although the parties are finally talking, more than 3 months after the elections, Ambassador Khalilzad was not encouraging that a political solution is in sight. He is putting modest pressure on the Iraqis. For instance, he told the Iraqis our response to continued deadlock of Iraq's political leaders might not be to their liking. He has told the Iraqi political leaders: It is your decision, and after you make it, we will make our own decision in response.

Although his statement is on the right track, it is still too subtle. It is too oblique. The political leaders of Iraq are deadlocked, feuding while Iraq descends toward all-out civil war. There is little chance of achieving a government of national unity without our pointedly and forcefully persuading the parties to make the compromises necessary to achieve it.

But what is the leverage that could be used to pointedly persuade the Iraqi leaders to make those needed compromises? We can't dictate to them

who should be their leaders. That would undermine the President's belatedly arrived at explanation for his decision to attack Iraq, which is replacing a brutal dictator with a democracy. Yes, there should be a need to apply pressure. The prospect of sectarian clashes and the specter of civil war should be sufficient incentives on their own to end the deadlock. But, so far, they don't appear to be.

To help break the political gridlock, a combination of carrots and sticks is required. The carrot is the provision of economic development funds, particularly from neighboring wealthy countries, on the condition that a national unity government is created and produces a coherent economic plan. The biggest stick is clearly telling the Iraqis that our continued presence in Iraq is dependent upon their promptly putting together a government of national unity.

Sadly, the rhetoric of the President and the administration has often worked against the pressure which needs to be applied against the Iraqi leaders.

The President recently asked the American people, for instance, for their patience. I believe instead he should be telling the Iraqi leaders bluntly and openly that the American people are understandably downright impatient with Iraqi leaders fiddling while Baghdad is burning.

The Secretary of State has said we are in Iraq as long as needed. I believe she should be telling the Iraqi leaders that our continued presence is dependent upon their doing what only they can do: reach an agreement on a government of national unity. That political settlement is not only the best hope, it is the only hope of ending the insurgency and the sectarian strife. The pressure to reach an agreement on a government of national unity needs to be applied clearly and forcefully, pointedly and publicly, not just by President Bush but also by the leaders of Iraq's neighbors.

In our meeting with the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Erdogan, we urged him to do just that, and he said he would. The leaders of all of Iraq's neighboring countries need to do the same because an unstable and civil war-torn Iraq threatens them even more than us.

Is there a risk in this course of forcefully pressing Iraqi leaders to agree on a national unity government? Is there a risk in following that course? The answer is yes. But there is a greater risk in continuing on the current course of political gridlock while sectarian fires threaten to burn out of control.

The President needs to act based on the reality that we confront in Iraq. He recently said if there were a premature departure of American troops that "Iraq would become a place of instability."

Would become? Iraq is a place of grave instability, and to use the words of Ambassador Khalilzad in an inter-

view he gave with a London newspaper: "Iraq is moving towards civil war."

My conclusion is this: President Bush needs to forcefully transmit a message to the Iraqis in plain and simple language: your survival as a nation depends on your working things out together. Your survival as a nation is in the hands of your political leaders, not our military. Along with Senator COLLINS and Senator JACK REED, as I indicated, we wrote the President on March 10, 2006, and ended with the following thoughts:

We urge you to make it clear to the Iraqis how important it is to us that they achieve a political settlement, form a unity government, and make the necessary amendments to their Constitution. We believe it is essential that the Iraqi leaders understand that our continued presence is not unconditional, and that whether they avoid all-out civil war and have a future as a Nation is in their hands. If they don't seize that opportunity, we can't protect them or save them from themselves.

We ended:

The bottom line is this: The United States needs to make it clear to Iraqi leaders that a prompt political settlement is not only essential to them, it is a condition of our continued presence.

We all want to succeed in Iraq, regardless of the positions we took going in. Whether we favored or opposed our intervention, and whether we are critics or supporters of the administration's policies since then, we all want to succeed. We all want to try to leave Iraq in better condition, obviously, than we found it. But to maximize the chances of success, we need to maximize pressure on the leaders of Iraq to end their political deadlock. The insurgents and outside terrorists are not going to be defeated and civil war is not going to be averted if Iraqi leaders are at war with themselves. They should know that if they squander the chance to bring political unity to Iraq, we cannot and will not protect them from their own folly.

Let me close by thanking our Presiding Officer for leading, again, one of the most extraordinary visits to a foreign country that I have ever participated in. His leadership was essential to making the visits that we were able to make and for all of us to come back with greater information and with thoughts about where the future lies.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent at this time that the letter that I referred to from the three Senators be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, March 10, 2006.

THE PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: There is a consensus among our senior military commanders that a political settlement involving the three main Iraqi groups is essential for defeating the insurgency and that the Iraqis need to agree on a government of national unity and

make significant compromises to amend their Constitution to achieve such a political settlement. A political settlement is also essential to prevent all-out civil war and is a critical element of our exit strategy for our troops.

In the midst of the spiral of violence, it is clear to us that we must act to change the current dynamic in Iraq and that the only thing that can produce that change is a political settlement that is accepted by all the major groups.

But an Iraqi political settlement won't happen without pressure from the United States. We can't make them form a unity government, we can't decide who fills what positions in that government, and we can't write the amendments to their Constitution for them.

By a 79-19 vote last year, the Senate said that:

"The Administration should tell the leaders of all groups and political parties in Iraq that they need to make the compromises necessary to achieve the broad-based and sustainable political settlement that is essential for defeating the insurgency in Iraq, within the timetable they set for themselves."

We urge you to make it clear to the Iraqis how important it is to us that they achieve a political settlement, form a unity government, and make the necessary amendments to their Constitution. We believe it is essential that the Iraqi leaders understand that our continued presence is not unconditional, and that whether they avoid all-out civil war and have a future as a nation is in their hands. If they don't seize that opportunity, we can't protect them or save them from themselves.

The bottom line is this: The U.S. needs to make it clear to Iraqi leaders that a prompt political settlement is not only essential to them, it is a condition of our continued presence.

Sincerely,

CARL LEVIN.
SUSAN M. COLLINS.
JACK REED.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Chair again for his leadership, not only on this one trip but for his leadership in the Senate on so many matters of national security, including the ongoing effort that all of us are participating in to find a positive outcome in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DRU'S LAW

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this coming month it will be 2 years since the body of a young woman named Dru Sjodin was found in Crookston, MN.